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UNCLAS ROME 002885

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: IRAQ: ITALY PRAISES DRAFT IRAQI CONSTITUTION

REF: STATE 158420

1. (U) DCM has requested an appointment to discuss reftel demarche with the MFA's Director General for the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In the meantime, below are comments from PM Berlusconi and Deputy PM/FM Fini regarding the Iraqi constitution.

2. (U) In an August 28 press statement following his meeting with President Putin in Russia, PM Berlusconi said he and Putin had discussed the new Iraqi constitution and were "pleased with the Constitutional Assembly's approval." He added that the constitution showed a "very broad" consensus and expressed his optimism that Sunni objections would be overcome. Furthermore, Berlusconi praised the document itself, saying it contained "all the principles of a democracy."

3. (U) In an August 29 press statement, FM and Deputy PM Fini echoed these sentiments, saying the constitution "recognizes fundamental values and principles." While calling the failure of the Sunnis to sign the document a "negative element," Fini nevertheless said that some Sunni political representatives are showing some positive signals, and that "we have to continue to use all possible diplomatic efforts so that the Sunni community votes in the referendum." Fini added, "the international community must work in order not to make this great opportunity go to waste."

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2005ROME02885 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED